the online collection

by aurora “caesthoffe” martin

listen to my heartbeat
as it fuses with your dial up tones

thread my veins with your wires
pump my blood so it flows
the same direction as your electrons

the screws inside my ankle
are the same ones holding your fan together
i run my hand over the scar and yearn
for a body as strong as your ASB plastic

i wish i could die before you
so i didn't have to hold
your lifeless body in my arms
listening as the tech guy
tells me about your failed CPU
and my eyes didn't have to watch you
gutted from the outside in
to hold the vomit back in my throat
as i watch him tear apart my friend

whether it's my body or yours
they call it anatomy either way

and i hope you knew that i loved you
when i held your mouse in mine
and i hope that theres a heaven
where we're equal in gods eyes

// my computer

// my future

```
i fall betw
een the pri   the
me meridian     sky
my body fol       line
ded a milli-------------
on ways ori   is
gami'd unti     pre
l i can't s       ttier
ee myself a-------------
s me who  i   on
am is unkno     my
wn to those       own;
that are th-------------
e closest t   sile
o myself in     nce
between the       is my
closet  and-------------
the unemplo   new
yment  line     favo
the old que       rite
eer special         song
-------------------------
```

i hope the belt reminded him of wires
the same rubbery stick to anxious skin;
pinched between his fingers
in the cover of the closet

i make myself angry,
imagining police ripping up floorboards
for a note i know he typed

forever damned to a desktop folder

i wonder if his heels felt the difference
between office carpet and brooklyn apartments

indents of clothing on unmoving skin,
from piracy to death
the difference that the cold makes

// aaron

// tip of the tongue

i bawled my eyes out
when i couldn't recall your name

snot dribbled down my nose
and i wiped it on the back of my hand
like i did when i was a kid

and i begged god
but i guess he didn't hear me
because the pieces of you i remember
aren't enough to place

and i wept because i couldn't go back
and i wept harder because i couldn't move on
and i cried because i never finished my cake

but i dry my eyes with my sleeve
and hold onto these memories
because i know you'll be back someday
and when someday comes
there's a place for you here
—i even bought a disc drive

scratched lottery tickets
meet unopened bills
and a court date set in July
is pushed to the back of his mind
as he is swept up
in fireballs and gin
rings cast his table
from drinks, unaccounted;
blending days
blend harder
when blacking out becomes routine

// blackout

// route

i walk the same route
to work every day
despite the true crime influencers
and talk show hosts,
who tell me
it's a sure-fire way
to become a missing poster
inside the local walmart

i walk with my headphones in,
in the city, late at night

i take shortcuts in alleys
and take the bus
to the taco bell downtown
where my dad told me
the riff-raff like to hang

ive never been one to take precautions
because i know
no matter how many

drinks, i turn down
articles of clothing, i wear
or keys, i keep between my fingers

they'll still tell me
what i should've done better
if anything ever did happen.
and everytime they do,
all i hear
is "you should've been born a man"

// before halloween

his gildan shirt clung to his chest
and tapered off the further
down his body it went
it looked great on him
but it looked a lot better
laying atop my lampshade

my hand felt across
the patches and pins
scouring his jeans
the dental floss caught
on the guitar-induced callouses
of my fingertips

slowly, un-donned
his skin no longer
with a barrier to mine

...

his boxers sat on my hips
far better than his

my necklace looked nicer
clipped around his neck

and his shoes were always better
when they were sat
by the door of my apartment

// after halloween

i feel like the sky is getting closer

my lighter's flicks
tally my cigarettes,
as i count the clouds

i blink—
the moon is bigger

arms wrap around my waist
lips brush against my neck
my eyes close

hands rest on my hips
my eyes open
and the moon moves another inch

...

i feel like the sky is getting closer
i blink,
the moon is bigger

i walk the same route
to work, everyday
despite the true crime talk show hosts
who tell me
it's a sure-fire way
to become a missing poster
inside the local walmart
—a milk carton kid in 2024

i walk with
headphones in,
and my hood up
taking shortcuts
through alleys and underpasses
onto the bus
to the taco bell downtown
where my dad told me
the riffraff like to hang
with the only riffraff,
being the one
walking into a faux-mexican fast food chain—
with an outfit you could only find
on the manequin at a Victorias Secret
—hidden under an oversized hoodie

because on days like today,
where being Rory is a herculean task
i put on my shortest skirt & my tiniest top
and go to the club as Aurora instead

...

"i have to work tomorrow"
i tell him,
incredulously undersold,
as his hand rests
particularly on my thigh

i imagine in this moment,
the sense my friends could drill
into my dumb drunk brain
but they're not here
so i grab the strange man's hand
hop in the taxi,
and slur my address to the driver
against whatever judgement i have left

ill cry about it
on the phone with them tomorrow
because for one glorious night,
ill be wanted for something
you can't see acne in the dark
and strobe lights like to lie